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CHALLENGE

THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER OF PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

WORKERS VOTE TO STRIKE

FIGHT WARMAKER BOEING'S ATTACK ON ALL WORKERS

PUGET SOUND, WA, August 30 —"Strike, Strike" reverberated down the Auburn plant aisles. Thousands or Boeing Workers marched outside negotiations near the airport chanting, "Out the Gate, in '08." Seven thousand emptied the Everett complex for three days running taunting the company to "Paint the Lines," a reference to the green lines security traditionally paints around the factories to mark where picketers shouldn't cross. These marches followed a month of Rolling Thunder: workers banging their tools making a deafening sound like thunder rolling through the plants, every hour on the hour. Boeing workers have taken matters into their own hands, forcing the union mis-leadership to recommend a strike Sept. 4.

This militancy did not arise spontaneously. For years, PLP helped lead mass rebellions in Boeing plants building Rolling Thunder, organizing mass marches and protest rallies as part of class struggle against the bosses and their imperialist plans for the aerospace industry. The union misleaders have tried to appropriate the tactics, but it got away from them. As IAM District President Tom Wroblewski lamented, "Once you get these guys up the mountain, it hard to get them back down again."

Workers should harbor no illusions that this militant activity alone can reverse the sharpening attacks on our class. Millions must be guided by communist, class-conscious ideas, organized by the revolutionary communist Progressive Labor Party (PLP), in order to truly change society.

Global capitalist competition causes the general trend to attack industrial workers, particularly younger, newer workers. The rising industrial and military prowess of Russia and China, the U.S. bosses' main imperialist competitors, gives new urgency to the U.S. bosses' need to retool and cut costs. In addition, the racist super-exploitation of subcontract workers, those working in a rapidly growing number of non-union, low-wage sweatshops, is changing the face of the aerospace industry.

Reject the "Kick Your Kids to the Kurb (KKK)" Contract! Strike!

Boeing is flush with cash at the moment, having made more that $13 billion in profit in recent years. The bosses, however, feel pressed to hold every penny as they look to the sharpening fight against their imperialist rivals. The union misleaders, meanwhile, are bickering over how much of this cash they can get to bribe older union workers to sell out the next generation.

Between 2006 and 2008, average Boeing wages have dropped $6/hour because of lower rates for new hires agreed to in prior contracts. This contract will lock in the trend of increasing exploitation, as nearly 50% of the Boeing workforce, those currently earning the highest wages, will retire in the next few years.

The tactics may differ, but in the end, aerospace workers will suffer the same fate as their class brothers and sisters in auto and other industries. More work will be subcontracted to the non-union shops; union workers will face lay-offs or lower pay in the current plants. We must not accept this contract. Workers must strike!



Boeing Workers ready for action

Workers Debate Dismal Future Under Capitalism

Progressive Labor Party called for a "United Aerospace Strike" in our well-received flyer at the airport demonstration. We included solidarity statements from Mississippi shipyard workers, Long Beach Boeing workers and L.A. subcontractor workers. Every statement warned of "losing higher-paid jobs to lower paid, non-union employees at an alarming rate."

The battle for the hearts and minds of the Boeing workers is as sharp as the sound of Rolling Thunder. The pro-capitalist union leaders offer ideas that will not challenge the bosses' system. They blame the bad contract offer and the loss of union jobs on "this blatant example of corporate greed." That's why they tried, and failed, to start the chant "Boeing's offer is unfair, all we want is our fair share."

Workers debated the unions' ideas for hours on the shop floor, with many rejecting the misleaders' analysis. We built this factory with our labor, and our class, the working class, should control it!

As the bosses fled Rolling Thunder, we organized meetings of CHALLENGE readers in the plants. Riffing on the debates initiated during the Party's July Summer Project, we discussed how bad ideas undermined the Chinese Revolution. We learned how Chinese revisionists — misleaders who revised revolutionary ideas to take power back from the working class — defeated the Cultural Revolution in the 1970s, and consolidated capitalism's hold on China. They busted up the communal farms, sending the equivalent of the U.S. population into the new Chinese factories at dirt-cheap wages. The imperialist rivalry has never been the same.

Kick Capitalism To The Curb

We also discussed how capitalism reinforces racism,

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Democrats' Lovefest Deadly for Workers

In a spectacle worthy of rock stars, with 84,000 screaming fans and July 4th-style fireworks, the Democratic Party named Barack Obama and Joe Biden to its party's ticket for the November elections. As we go to press, the Republican Convention has begun and will name John McCain and Sarah Palin (another "fresh face") as their candidates. Despite being bombarded by frenzied and non-stop media coverage of the campaigns, workers should understand that neither ticket offers anything to us except capitalist exploitation marked by endless wars, attacks on our living standards, and divide-and-rule racism against African Americans and Latinos. The Obama campaign, with its mass outreach to youth, black and Latin, and labor, dangerously misleads millions into supporting the ruling class.

Obama has captured the imagination of millions who want to believe that he will bring change that would help them in these tough times. But Obama has the same backers as President Bush and Dick Cheney! (See PLP Elections Pamphlet). He will serve the same interests! The rulers believe that Obama's appeal will make the working class more enthusiastic about following U.S. rulers into continuing and expanding wars and inevitable cutbacks in wages, services, and social programs. Like Kennedy, Carter and Clinton before him, Obama represents false hope for change and is simply a front man for the ruling class, "fresh face" notwithstanding.

The Context: War for Control over Energy Resources

U.S. imperialists lead a declining empire that defines the limits of any president's initiatives. U.S. power, while strong and doing great damage worldwide, is weakening relative to other rising powers including the European Union, Russia, China, and even some secondary capitalist powers like Iran and Venezuela that gain leverage by allying with the rising powers competing with the U.S. At the core of these disputes is control over the world's energy resources, centered in the Middle East.

The Acceptance Speech and the Issues

Obama's speech was standard liberal fare. His rhetoric was indistinguishable from his Democratic Party predecessors including John Kennedy, Hubert Humphrey, Jimmy Carter, Al Gore, John Kerry, or Bill Clinton. Like them, he promised improvements in all aspects of life (see box). Yet his predecessors have never achieved these goals and cannot because they interfere with the needs of the capitalists for profits. In fact, Bill Clinton dismantled the welfare program so that now the poverty rate has increased dramatically while welfare rolls have fallen drastically!

Obama is tied to the ruling class by a hundred strings, as demonstrated by his selection of long-term Washington insider Joe Biden for Vice-President and his coterie of advisors who all belong to ruling-class think-tanks and policy institutes like the Council on Foreign Relations that ensure the continuity of U.S. imperialism regardless of who is president.

Dissent and Protest

At the convention, thousands rallied to attack the Democratic Party for its failure to champion working-class interests to end the wars and achieve social justice. However, it's an illusion to think the Democrats, a ruling-class party, would ever truly represent workers' interest.

The Iraq Veterans Against the War demanded to address the convention around the need to incorporate their goals — an immediate end to the wars and occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan, better care for returning veterans and reparations for the Iraqi people. Obama turned a deaf ear to these demands and others, relying on thousands of police armed with pepper spray, rubber bullets, and truncheons to threaten the demonstrators and move them far away from the convention, arresting over 130 and beating many. The cops did the same to protestors at the Republican Convention.

Where Do We Go From Here?

The Democratic and Republican conventions are clown shows to entertain and distract us while the country's actual rulers, the rich capitalists, make sure that their every need is met by their faithful political servants in both parties. They use the political process, including the conventions, to deceive us into thinking that voting can significantly affect our interests. The ruling class wants to recruit millions of us into supporting U.S. imperialism by blunting our class-consciousness about our exploitation by the rich capitalists, bankers, developers and government officials. The working class should instead attack these elections for the shell game they represent, and build a militant, internationalist, anti-racist, anti-imperialist opposition to capitalism. This approach is not "on the ballot" in this election — revolution for workers' power and communism can never be won through a ballot, but only through revolution and armed struggle.✪

What does Obama stand for?

• **JOBS —** Obama promises "more jobs," ending outsourcing of jobs overseas. But Obama cannot defy the laws of capitalism. They dictate that capitalists must drive for higher profits to survive and therefore seek out the lowest wage markets, whether they be in China, Mexico or Latin America, as the Japanese and European automakers do in seeking lower wages in the U.S.

• **WAGES —** Obama promises help for "hard-working Americans." But again, capitalism dictates that U.S. bosses must drive down wages to be able to compete with rival bosses worldwide. So they "outsource" jobs to subcontractor shops from across the southern U.S. to California, jobs which pay $10 an hour, less than half of what workers in unionized factories like Boeing earn, leading to mass layoffs and mass unemployment.

• **UNEMPLOYMENT —** Because of the above two factors, capitalism must create a "reserve army of unemployed." No president in history has ever ended unemployment because it's built into capitalism's drive for maximum profits which leads to "bubble-bursting" recessions and depressions.

• **RACISM —** Obama promises to "bring people together" while blaming victims, not racism, for their misery. But Obama won't withdraw the 100,000 cops that Clinton put on the streets, cops who daily attack and murder black and Latino workers and youth. Again, Obama's capitalism cannot function, and has never functioned, without the hundreds of billions in super-profits that the racist super-exploitation of black and Latino workers rakes in for the bosses.

• **THE ENVIRONMENT —** Obama promises to "be free of foreign oil in ten years." (!) But U.S. capitalism needs to control that foreign oil as a lever in its battle with imperialist rivals in Europe, Russia, China and Japan. Obama promises to put money into non-polluting energy sources, but he doesn't tell us that no modern army or industry can exist without oil. You can't drive a tank or fly a jet fighter on wind power.

• **A DRAFT —** Obama promises to "rebuild our military to meet future conflicts." How? With the current depleted and exhausted U.S. Army? It can only be done by drafting millions, which Obama aims to accomplish through the back door of "National Service." This would supposedly give youth a "choice" of "public service" or military service, and promise undocumented immigrant youth citizenship in exchange for becoming cannon fodder in his endless "future conflicts." Where else will he get the troops he wants to put into Afghanistan?

• **FASCISM —** Obama complains about the Bush assault on civil liberties, but meanwhile votes for the latest Bush bill to tap an untold number of phone calls in the name of "national security." And he hasn't uttered a word about repealing the fascist Patriot Act. The rulers need such laws to put down potential rebellions by workers and youth fed up with all the attacks on their lives.

• **WAR —** Obama promises to gradually withdraw most (not all) troops from Iraq, but wants to enlarge the army by at least 92,000, sending more soldiers into Afghanistan to continue the killing of thousands of civilians in order to protect proposed oil pipelines in that area of Asia. And Obama's pledge to handle "future conflicts" by definition must maintain and expand the hundreds of U.S. military bases throughout the world upon which U.S. capitalism depends to control the flow of oil. In defending his ability to be "commander-in-chief," Obama proudly cites all the past U.S. wars that have seen Democrats in charge.

And Obama's opponent, John McCain, is just as much a loyal servant of capitalism on every one of the above issues.

OUR FIGHT

✪Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to smash capitalism — wage slavery. While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions all over the world.

✪Capitalism returned to the Soviet Union and China because socialism failed to wipe out many aspects of the profit system, like wages and division of labor.

✪Capitalism inevitably leads to wars. PLP organizes workers, students and soldiers to turn these wars into a revolution for communism — the dictatorship of the proletariat. This fight requires a mass Red Army led by the communist PLP.

✪Communism means working collectively to build a society where sharing is based on need. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. Everyone will share in society's benefits and burdens.

✪Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of race.

✪Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women — sexism — and traditional gender roles created by class society.

✪Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One International working class, one world, one Party.

✪Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!

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At LA Rally vs. Police Murder

PL'ers Expose 'Good-Cop-Bad-Cop' Misleaders

LOS ANGELES, CA. — The working class is no stranger to racist killer cops, especially in the recent multiple murders involving the LAPD and LA County Sheriffs. PLP members attended a candlelight vigil for Christian Portillo, who was gunned down by the murderous cops in Lennox. Recalling PLP's response to Sean Bell's murder in New York, we decided to bring revolutionary politics to these events and received positive responses from the working class there.

As the vigil progressed, there was a call by community leaders for a march toward the Sherriff's office that was to remain calm and collected. White flags were passed out along with signs calling for an end to police murder. Similar to the misleaders in New York, leaders of this march called for exposing the "bad" cops and respecting the "good" cops. These misleaders called for peace and increased participation in the system. Once Party members saw reformist politics leading the march, we mobilized to circulate more CHALLENGES and literature. One comrade began chanting "Policia cochina, racista y asesina!" (Police, pigs, racist and murderous!) that was warmly received and picked up by our working-class brothers and sisters.

The workers' anger, especially that of Christian Portillo's brother, grew. The march became a picket line and eventually PLP pushed to move down the block in front of the Sheriffs' station. PL members' chants got louder and more militant. Then, Portillo's brother tacked a flier attacking these racist murderers on the station wall. One comrade took a bullhorn and gave a speech linking the murder of Christian Portillo to the capitalist system that would continue to flourish with reformist politics. This comrade called for workers to fight back and join our fight for communism. At the end of the march, the misleaders continued their call to work within the system. Another comrade jumped on the bullhorn and gave another speech in Spanish reminding the crowd of the 1992 rebellions in response to the Rodney King beating. He called for joining PLP and building for communist revolution on the job, in the schools, and in the streets.

The most important lesson we learned is that we should never underestimate our class. Our initial hesitation to be militant at a vigil based on the fear of being seen as "opportunist" (taking advantage of the situation) was wrong. The actions of the working class in Lennox and especially some of the Portillo family members reminded PL'ers of the responsibility they have to build the fight for communism. PLP made contacts here and will continue to build the relationships needed for the long-term fight for revolution! Only revolution will end these brutal police murders and the terror that is capitalism! ✪



PICKET LINE IN FRONT OF KKKOP STATION

Protesters Charge Cops With Racist Killing of Latino Worker

Workers PLP met at the Lennox vigil (above) called and invited us to another rally which we attended in Compton the next week against the police killings. Family members of the several victims of racist police terror actively led chants, as they continue being under police surveillance and intimidation. The rally got support from cars passing by and honking.

PLP members led the chant "Black, Brown, Asian, White — to smash racism we must unite!" Later, when Christian Portillo's sister spoke, she echoed these sentiments, saying that we all need to unite against racist cop terror. Portillo's friends and family all took CHALLENGE and were interested in reading it along with our leaflet linking the racist police murders of Portillo and Kevin Wicks in Inglewood with the rulers' drive to make the working class pay for their wars and economic crisis. One person we had met at the first rally asked us for the new CHALLENGE. She had read the previous one and liked it. She noted that this was the sort of thing that started the civil war in El Salvador. We agreed and could see why the Summer Project which just ended was so important.

By expanding CHALLENGE networks and organizing workers in the factories, in the military and in schools, PLP is laying the basis to lead the fight against racist police killings around revolutionary communist politics and to build the fight to end racist terror once and for all, not with dead-end reforms but through the long term fight for communist revolution.✪

Mississippi Terror Raid:

Workers Shouldn't Be Suckers for Anti-Immigrant Racism

LAUREL, MISSISSIPPI, August 28 — The Gestapo-like raids carried out by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) cops struck again, arresting 595 workers employed by Howard Industries, world's largest manufacturer of electrical transformers employing 3,000 workers in southeastern Mississippi. And the traitorous AFL-CIO applauded the raid! (See below)

In May, ICE carried out a similar raid, arresting hundreds of workers at a meatpacking plant in Postville, Iowa. These raids are terrorizing many small towns nation-wide. At the same time the Laurel raid was taking place, a rumor of an ICE raid in Perry, a small Iowa town 100 miles from Postville, was panicking the Latino community, 25% of Perry's population.

Hundreds of heavily-armed ICE agents raided Howard Industries' Laurel and nearby Ellisvile facilities. They arrived in unmarked cars and white vans, sealed the plants and rounded up "suspect" workers, questioning them in mobile trailers.

Just as the Nazis used yellow stars to identify Jews, Latino workers were segregated from other workers. U.S. citizens were given blue armbands to divide them from immigrants. Agents wearing flak vests stopped motorists driving near the plant and told them to leave the area.

The raid's blatant fascist-like racism shocked many. An immigrant rights group in Jackson, the state capital, criticized the raid, saying families with children were involved. "It's horrific what ICE is doing to these families and these communities," said Shuya Ohno, a spokesman for the Mississippi Immigrants Rights Alliance. "It's just hard to imagine that this is the United States of America." (NY Times, 8/27)

A woman entering a local church with four small children said several of the youngsters' parents had been detained. The woman, a translator for many of the families, said: "I don't like this at all. I don't understand it. They have come here to work. It's very sad."

But this is exactly the U.S.A. today, a country led by a ruling class which needs more racism, more fascist terror. The raids' aim is not really to deport all undocumented workers, or even to find those guilty of "identity theft" as ICE claims. The goal is to terrorize immigrant workers, and all workers,

'The goal is to terrorize immigrant workers, and all workers, so they accept super-exploitation, rotten working conditions, more social service cutbacks and get used to the kind of mass terror that the bosses and their police agencies will use against ALL workers who refuse to swallow these conditions.'

so they accept super-exploitation, rotten working conditions, more social service cutbacks and get used to the kind of mass terror that the bosses and their police agencies will use against ALL workers who refuse to swallow these conditions. These attacks will continue no matter who's elected the next President.

Plants like this one here will become more important for the bosses' war machine as it gears for wider wars, from Afghanistan to the Caucasus. The ruling class realizes that the U.S. population is changing. According to Census figures, in several decades most U.S. workers will be immigrants, Latinos or blacks. So racist super-exploitation will be needed more than ever to keep the bosses' super-profits rolling in.

But this also becomes a contradiction for the bosses: they need those workers they're terrorizing for their war plants and their military. So, while we might hear a lot of empty talk about "the end of racism" — "after all," they tell us, "look at Obama" — the opposite is happening.

This makes it primary for PLP to organize among these factory workers, and all workers and soldiers, to win them to fight racism, understanding that capitalism cannot live without racist exploitation. All workers must see these ICE raids as an attack against the entire working class. The AFL-CIO did the opposite here. Rather than unite the workers and organize them all, it pitted unionized workers against immigrant workers.

Robert Shaffer, regional AFL-CIO official, applauded the raid, saying he's complained for a long time about how companies in southern Mississippi hire undocumented immigrants, disgustingly adding the racist comment that the region "looks like a little Mexico." The same union traitors who, because of their pro-boss sellout politics, have failed to organize millions of workers — citizens or immigrants — nationwide, are now blaming the victims for their own failures.

Workers who fall for this racist trap are cutting their own throat. We must defend our fellow immigrant workers when the bosses attack. Our motto should be, "All for one and one for all; same enemy same fight, workers of the world, unite!"✪

Bosses Turn Education into Schools for Imperialism

From metal detectors, cameras and police presence to eroding union protections for teachers, trends in education point to a tightening control that is part of a growing fascism in society. Workers and youth organizing in movements to oppose an accelerating cascade of budget-cut assaults will come up against these physical and coercive elements of the police state. Through sharp, vigorous and patient organizing inside such movements, communists can win masses of workers and youth to see growing fascism not only as cause for despair but as cause for revolution.

Capitalist education always serves to teach the big ideas needed so that the ruling class can pursue its aims with minimal resistance from the workers. The Cold War education of the 1950s produced a society that mostly accepted a vicious anti-communist war in Vietnam at considerable cost in lives and absorbed its costs for ten years. As the Cold War heated up again under Reagan in the 1980s, brutal wars in Central America and huge cuts in social spending ensued. A U.S. population won to anti-communism tolerated these attacks. The (unexpected) reward for U.S, imperialism was the collapse of the Soviet Union, its main competitor. During the Cold War U.S. schools taught young-people anti-communism so they would not protest the rulers' war plans.

Today U.S. imperialism faces a situation that is both similar and different. New competitors are rising, and as CHALLENGE has emphasized, control of Mid-East oil is key to dominance in the coming period. What teachers are asked to teach about the Mid-East matters. The ruling class needs U.S. schools to win over future workers to U.S. imperialism.

In New York State all high school students must take Regents exams in several subjects to graduate. In Global History students have been asked to write about the "positives and negatives" or the "differing viewpoints" on imperialism. These topics do more than force thousands of students to argue for imperialism on test day. Because topics tend to be recycled, these questions also exercise enormous influence over teachers who care deeply about preparing their students for examination and graduation. Teachers frame their treatment of imperialism in similar terms. Teachers are pressured to avoid teaching imperialism as the racist and genocidal system that it is. Like slavery and the Holocaust, imperialism has no positive characteristics. This moral stance is impossible when teaching to the test.

This past June, question #41 reads:

"In August 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait. The United Nations response led to the Persian Gulf War of 1991. This response is an example of:

Détente

Empire building

Totalitarianism

Collective Security

In classrooms, where the struggle for literacy is desperate, teachers tempted to speak about U.S. imperialism are discouraged by such a question. The "correct" answer was choice #4. The test's writers want Americans to understand Desert Storm not as an exercise in U.S. imperialism but "collective security." But even more alarming than the right answer is the wrong one, specifically choice #2. Teachers who focus on actual history are in trouble. The history is clear:

'Capitalist education always serves to teach the big ideas needed so that the ruling class can pursue its aims with minimal resistance from the workers.'

The U.S. developed relations with the Saudis after World War II, calling the oil reserves of the Mid-East "a stupendous source of strategic power and the greatest material prize in the history of the world" Carter proclaimed his doctrine of U.S. dominance in the Mid-East in 1980 and created a "rapid-reaction force" designed to invade the area. Reagan transformed this force into Centcom, which has grown under every president and directed three major wars in fifteen years.

This history points to choice #2, imperialism. Teachers who speak in terms of U.S. imperialism run the risk of "confusing" their students and maybe even costing them the one point they need in order to graduate. The prospect is terrifying enough, especially to new teachers, to dampen a real critique of U.S. imperialism. Additionally, the teacher-training taboo of never "sharing your view" finishes off many a good lesson about the true role of the U.S. in the world before it ever begins. No doubt the rulers have the good old-fashioned witch-hunt in their arsenal for teachers who refuse to toe the line of U.S. patriotism in class, and they will use it again as they have in the past. Next to these exams, however, the Cold War persecution of teachers was crude and perhaps even less effective in terms of the levels of conformity achieved.

Luckily, working class students can and do respond to real history teaching. Facts, a veteran PLP member used to say, are stubborn things. Several students informally surveyed on this question after the exam knew to stay away from choice number two even though they knew it was correct. In class, the teacher led discussions to ensure they understood the purpose of the test and what the testers were looking for. In fact deconstructing an exam this way actually makes test prep easier: "always pick the choice that makes America look good."

When the "positives-of-imperialism" question rears its ugly head, we have an opportunity to raise important ideas among teachers and students about growing fascism, the role of education and the needs of U.S. imperialism. This article was discussed with several teachers and students in the base of PLP at a school where we're active for suggestions prior to publication. We must take every chance the rulers give us to build our movement for communist revolution.✪

Racist Gentrification Sweeping Workers Out of Harlem

HARLEM, NEW YORK CITY, August 19 — Several weeks ago, the Record Shack, a legendary 35-year-old music store on 125th St in Harlem, was suddenly evicted. The owner was not even allowed inside to get his personal possessions; his goods were brought to a Yonkers storage facility that's asking $12,000 for their return. The landlord is a local church, The United House of Prayer, that has been selling off its ample property to the highest bidders, including banks and chain stores, that are invading the rapidly-gentrifying neighborhood. Last weekend, as on many past Sundays, local activists rallied outside the shuttered music store, demanding its re-opening and condemning the landlord church.

Harlem, home to many poor and working-class African-Americans and a major cultural center, has already been cut in half. That is, housing affordable at the average Harlem worker's $20,000 wage and to small black-owned businesses are being displaced by luxury condos and upscale stores. What are being labeled "subsidized units" in the new buildings are pegged at incomes of $40,000-$60,000. Going, going, gone are affordable apartments and small businesses.

Resistance to gentrification has been constant, from students and residents uniting to oppose Columbia University's takeover of West Harlem, to a militant Movimiento por Justicia in East Harlem, to several groups in Central Harlem. There have been demonstrations large and small and several actions, uniting all the groups. Unfortunately, severe weaknesses pervade the struggle.

All the groups suffer from a major focus on politicians. They rightly denounce the sellouts like ex-mayor Dinkins and Rep. Charles Rangel, and Harlem's traitorous City Council representatives, but then hope to elect new politicians who say they will fight in the people's interest. No few individuals can turn around the basic fact that the government's role is — first and foremost — to protect the flow of profits, and also to control uprisings by the governed. But this obsession with elections means that debating the merits of individuals, or listening to politicians' speeches occupy many meetings.

Much activity is focused on a few people attending meetings of political bodies and hoping to influence their outcome. Although protesting at politicians' offices or events can be good focal points for mass actions, the major effort must be to build mass activity and expose the role of politics in a capitalist society. We need more mass actions such as gathering to stop evictions, or we could occupy renovation projects.

Nationalism is the other major stumbling block to building a mass campaign. At the August 3rd Record Shack demonstration, some people wanted to boycott other businesses owned by the Church, not a bad tactic, but on the basis that they were run by Jews or Koreans; they chanted "Buy Black." This slogan ignores the fact that the evil landlord is himself black, as are many other Harlem oppressors.



photo from www.pbase.com/turnert/image/27888447

It was possible to have a discussion with a few demonstrators about how racism is used to super-oppress and divide people, but nationalism serves to maintain those divisions and hide the underlying class divisions. When we all mass in large numbers with militant actions, then we'll really see which side people are on and allow us all — workers and students of all backgrounds — to fight together.

Some anti-gentrification movement fighters do see that capitalism, based on endless greed for profits, and built on racism, is the problem. By distributing CHALLENGE and having continuing discussions, we must try to win them to join the Party for the long struggle ahead and not become defeated by our current inability to turn around gentrification. ✪

Pakistan's Workers Fight Havoc Wreaked by U.S./Local Rulers' Attacks

After only five months, Pakistan's new coalition government has sunk into a seemingly unstoppable political and economic crisis: rapidly-rising inflation, increasing challenges from Islamic extremists and U.S.-India condemnation of Pakistan as a very serious threat to capitalist world security.

On August 18, the latest in a long line of U.S.-backed military strong men, President Pervez Musharraf, stepped down rather than face impeachment. While commentators predict his resignation heralds a new era, the chaos continues: a suicide bombing kills 30; another leaves 70 dead; one coalition partner resigns from government; thousands flee their homes during the biggest battle of the "war on terror" between the Pakistani army and the Taliban; president-to-be Asif Ali Zardari, leader of the Pakistani People's Party (PPP), declares, "The world is losing the war on terror."

Meanwhile, working-class anger at the rising cost of living — wheat flour, a staple, increased 26% in one month and transportation 14%, following last year's jump in consumer prices of almost 20% — government corruption and general insecurity led to nation-wide protests. In Karachi, Pakistan's Telecommunication Company workers struck in May, taking over the company's headquarters until July 28 when they won higher wages.

On-the-job actions erupt in textile factories, the cement industry, among teachers, hospital and other government departments as more workers demand wage increases to offset increased living costs. Critically affecting the government's military plans, 3,000 Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (Defense Ministry) workers, paid on a daily basis, are demanding pay increases and permanent jobs, now given to relatives and friends of army officials.

The PPP-led government blames Musharraf's nine-year dictatorship for worsening conditions, claiming he left a "mutilated" economy with a large trade deficit and a government budget deficit up 75%. But their "poor people's budget" follows Musharraf's policies that blatantly benefit Pakistan's ruling class and the U.S., which is insisting on the deregulation of Pakistan's economy. More privatization of public resources is planned, tax breaks on stock-market profits are extended two years and large tracts of land are reserved for foreign investors to develop agribusiness. Subsides for food, fuel oil, electricity and fertilizer are slashed over 25%.



With a nod to the painful poverty of its 168 million people — 70% exist on less than $2/day, 60 million are "food insecure" (according to a UN report) — the government trumpets its $507 million program to provide $15 per month, medical insurance and job training for 3.3 million desperately-poor families. This contrasts starkly with a military budget of $4.7 billion.

Since 2002 the army has also received $10 billion from the U.S. to fund Pakistan's military participation in the "war on terror" against the Taliban in the tribal belt along the Afghan/Pakistani border. But despite these billions, the insurgency has grown and the U.S. believes that the funding — paid in cash — is going elsewhere. In Pakistan it's no secret that it lines the pockets of top military officials, who use the war as a cash cow and want to keep it alive.

The root of Pakistan's current problems is U.S. bosses' need to use it as part of their goal of world domination. In 1978, President Jimmy Carter and his National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, (now an Obama foreign policy advisor) devised the "Bear Trap," a plot to defeat the U.S.'s main imperialist rival, the then Soviet Union, by drawing it into a war between the Afghan pro-Moscow government in Kabul and the wealthy landowners and religious zealots opposing it. The plan (in Brzezinski's words, "to give the Soviet Union its Vietnam"), involved the creation, funding and training of an Afghan mujahaddin army in Pakistan.

This led to a 12-year jihad that became the U.S.'s largest covert action, (estimated cost, $40 billion (The Nation, 2/15/99) the bulk coming from the U.S. and Saudi Arabia). It inflicted religious intolerance on the secular societies of Pakistan and Afghanistan, perpetrated some of the most brutal acts of terrorism and became the breeding ground for the Taliban and the al Qaeda terrorist networks now operating in 80 countries.

Today the U.S. claims factions in Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence are aiding the Taliban's resurgence. But the latter's strength is also growing because the Pakistani army is weakening. Soldiers see the officers' corruption and plunder and are demoralized. Desertions are rising. Many rank-and-file soldiers are reluctant to fight in a war overwhelmingly targeting civilians. Bloody confrontations, like the recent one killing many civilians and making 300,000 homeless, strengthen the Taliban's position.

"Why is our government bombing us from the air," shouted one refugee. U.S. air strikes from over the border in Afghanistan or from secret CIA bases in Pakistan that kill more villagers than terrorists intensify the anger.

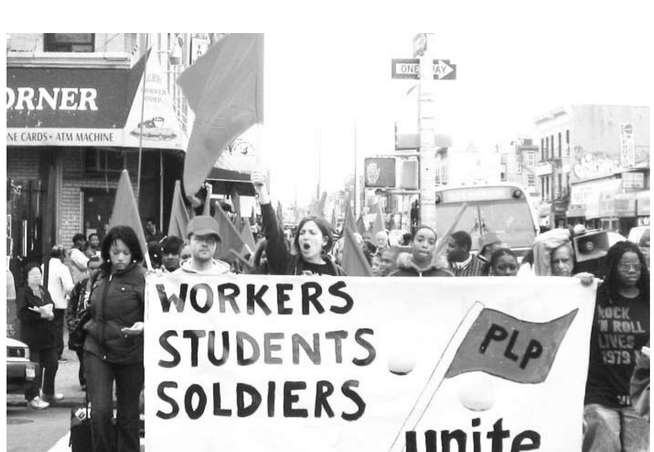
Caught between the army and the insurgents, people in the tribal areas are either coerced or voluntarily join with the Taliban. They do have an alternative: join with other workers in building PLP which is fighting the cause of all this misery, capitalism. ✪

(***Next, Part II: India, the U.S. and inter-imperialist rivalry over Pakistan, Kashmir and Afghanistan and the projected "balkanization" of Pakistan.***)

Afghanistan: Tables Turning on U.S. Aggressors

The "victory" claims of U.S. rulers when they invaded Afghanistan in 2001 have turned around. Not only is Osama bin Laden still at large, but the Taliban and its allies are now launching coordinated assaults on U.S. Army bases and an attack that killed ten elite French paratroopers. No wonder Obama and McCain are advocating troop increases in Afghanistan. At stake is a proposed oil pipeline running from Kazakhstan through Afghanistan and Pakistan to the Indian Ocean.

The seven-year occupation has devastated Afghans. Thousands of civilians have died from U.S./NATO air attacks, bombs, missiles and police fire, intensifying hatred of the imperialists. Poppy cultivation and corruption have soared. Poverty, homelessness, skyrocketing food prices, 75% illiteracy — this and worse is the lot of the average Afghan, the result of U.S. "liberation." With over 80% of women affected by domestic violence, Afghanistan has become the most dangerous place in the world for women.



All this has become fertile ground for Taliban and al Qaeda recruitment.

In the face of this devastation, Afghans have protested. Hundreds demonstrated against rising food prices; at a teachers' rally for wage hikes, students set 45 vehicles ablaze and attacked the cops. Angry street demonstrations protested the U.S.-puppet agreement to maintain permanent U.S. bases in Afghanistan.

All this is linked to the instability in bordering Pakistan, a Taliban base. ✪

Boeing Contract

Cont. from page1

dog capitalist economic base makes it impossible to mitigate, let alone eliminate, these divisions in the working class. "How can communism succeed when we are so divided against each other?" asked our friend.

We examined the different economic base in a communist system, based on the collective strength of the international working class and the slogan "from each according to their commitment, to each according to their need." We debated whether a movement guided by communist politics that smashed the ruling class and revolutionized the economic base could indeed change how workers interact with each other. The road to workers' power is built on fighting these evils of capitalism right now in this contract battle. But many agreed that the final defeat of racism, sexism and imperialism requires a communist revolution.

Everybody agreed this was a long, hard fight, made doubly difficult by the defeat of the old communist movement. One friend said, "A light bulb turned on" when PLP members explained how concessions to the wage system made by the old movement doomed it from the start.

In the end, the choice was made clear: we could kick our kids to the curb or kick capitalism to the curb. We left these discussions resolving to sell more CHALLENGES, distribute PLP basic documents Road to Revolution III and IV, organize two PLP study groups and build our revolutionary forces. As we go to print it looks like we'll strike on Sept. 4. Either way, the future is ours if we build these revolutionary communist forces in our industry and throughout the working class.✪

LETTERS

Latest Victim of Racist Cops: The Mayor!

I attended a rally in Berwyn Heights, Maryland, near the University of Maryland in Prince George's County. Over 100 people from the University and neighborhood gathered to protest this latest victim of the County's police – the MAYOR!

On July 29th, the SWAT team of the Sheriff's Office broke down his door, shot his dogs, cuffed him and his mother-in-law, and interrogated them for 90 minutes as they lay next to the bloody dead dogs on the floor of their living room. The cops claimed they were tracking a delivery of drugs (30 pounds of marijuana) to their home.

I arrived at the rally carrying CHALLENGES and a sign that read "Indict the Killers of Ronnie White - Stop Police Terror" to link this latest episode of police terror with the lynching of Ronnie White, a young man killed in his jail cell after his arrest on suspicion of killing a police officer (see CHALLENGE July 30, p. 3).

I encountered ten students from the University who had organized an earlier rally against the Berwyn Heights attack. They were eager to read our communist newspaper and wanted to organize a bigger demonstration against police brutality at the County Executive's office. Two of their leaders joined us and the People's Coalition for Police Accountability a few days later to discuss the use of state terror to control workers, how to fight for a more equitable system, and next steps in the campaign against racist police brutality.

Many people at the rally commented on the sign and the connections between the two attacks. One elderly white man commented that he used to be a "law-and-order man," but after seeing a resident cuffed, tasered, and insulted with racist comments, he changed his attitude. Some residents appeared to have had more sympathy for the dogs than for the dozens of workers — mostly black and Latino — who have been brutalized by this police force for decades.

The responses from black and white workers about these two attacks are paving the way for reviving significant multi-racial organizing against police brutality in the County. As capitalism's economic crisis deepens, more police brutality is likely as the ruling class tries to intimidate and control workers who are increasingly angry over their deteriorating quality of life. Now is the time to fight back!

Red organizer

Worker Agrees: He Gets 5%, Boss Gets 95%

Early one morning, ten comrades went to distribute leaflets and CHALLENGES in an industrial area in Los Angeles. Afterwards we approached two workers eating breakfast and gave them a leaflet and a CHALLENGE. We described the key role workers play in industry, how the boss exploits us and how the workers are the basis of all production. One comrade explained why the bosses need unemployment, and always pay lower wages, comparing the minimum wage to those of Boeing workers.

One worker agreed, saying he gets paid the minimum while every day the bosses demand more production. The other worker said he had no complaints; he received a good wage producing parts for cars because he's paid for his skills. I asked him, "How many pieces do you produce in a day?" He replied, "About 80 to 100." I asked, "How much does each piece cost?" He answered "$400."

I said take 80 pieces as a minimum, multiply that by five days a week, and then by four for a month of production and then by the $400 each piece costs. He was quiet for a while and then said it was a lot of money. I noted that his wages covered about 5% of his total production and that the other 95% went to the boss. Finally he said, "It's true; they're exploiting us when they just give us crumbs and the boss keeps most of the value of the production. And I thought I wasn't exploited!"

I'm a student from Mexico who participated in the Summer Project to further PLP's activities in the factories and to use these experiences to spread communist ideas to other workers.

A young comrade from Mexico



International PLP School in Spain

A three-day international PLP communist school was organized here in Spain, including friends from France, workers of Spain and immigrants from Brazil, Peru, Colombia and El Salvador living here and others.

A Brazilian said that back home people are told there are only two classes: the "high" and the middle class. This led to a good discussion about class struggle and how capitalism worldwide is trying to deny the contradictions of the only two classes in society: the working class which fights the exploitation by the capitalist class.

The school was a positive development for the international growth of the communist PLP. We will write more soon.

PLP'er in Spain

SUMMER OF COMMUNISM: Teachers' Role in Uniting Workers, Students

I'm a NYC high school teacher who just spent two weeks in the Los Angeles Summer Project. I had a great time working with older and younger comrades and friends. We all learned from one another, figuring out how to get CHALLENGE/DESAFIO to thousands of workers and students, to get contacts and start the process of winning those workers to the Party.

We talked a lot about the worker-student-soldier alliance (WSSA), bringing different groups in the working class together to fight capitalism. The power of the WSSA is far greater than its parts — none of them alone can really stop capitalism in its tracks, but together we can.

Early in the Project a comrade presented the history of the Party's work in the 1960s and '70s to build a WSSA, including in Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). I met the party through this work, which seemed the most logical and strongest work we could do to stop the war in Vietnam. Students alone couldn't shut the system down. But, I learned, united with workers we had a lot more power!

I began to think about the work teachers do. It seemed to me that there are two aspects of WSSA needed in that work. We should try to build an alliance between our students and local factory and military workers — that's what we discussed in the Summer Project. We also should forge unity between our own students and their teacher, who are also workers.

Most Party teachers work to win our students. We all have friends on staff who know about this. The staff we are friendliest with and closest to are the most committed to our students. But because teachers are trained to think of themselves as professionals, they are mostly not struggling to organize these students and their parents as fellow workers. Changing this would build real working-class unity in the schools and make clear that the enemy of good education is not parents or teachers, but capitalism. This won't happen by itself — we need to struggle as hard with our friends and colleagues as we try to do with students.

That's a big fight, which would expose the main contradiction in the school system — between the capitalist school system and the working-class students and their families.

In struggle,

One of many red teachers.

Are Radical Solutions Essential?

Recently I spoke to a group of religious humanists on the topic, "Our Future: Are Radical Solutions Essential?" I outlined the dire threats and conditions most of the world's working people and their friends face. I declared that the U.S. presidential campaign would never confront these issues.

I cited three authors whose work can be useful in these discussions. First, I summarized Jared Diamond's "Collapse," which concludes with an analysis of how twelve inter-related ecological/economic factors could well make the earth largely uninhabitable if not corrected in a reasonable time. Two — global warming and deadly competition for energy and water — are already at the root at expanding imperialist conflict. Michael Klare's "Resource Wars and Oil Wars" makes very clear the dominant role multi-national profit wars play in this growing carnage. The morning I spoke, the Georgia-Russia war had just begun and my sources easily proved that the U.S.-UK financed BTC pipeline was at the heart of this deadly conflict.

I also read much of an op-ed piece by Israeli historian Benny Morris (NY Times, 7/18) calling on Israel to bomb Iran extensively by the end of the year, saying if this attack didn't end the Iranian nuclear program, Israel "would have no choice" but to launch nuclear strikes that would slaughter millions in the Middle East. I then quoted both Obama and McCain assuring Israel that they support "all options being left on the table" and that both want to widely expand the U.S. imperial war machine.

Finally I recommended reading Joel Kovel's "Enemy of Nature" which brilliantly attacks capitalism as the root of exploitation, ecological collapse and wars.

The audience so appreciated this candor and clarity that they rose for a standing ovation. Most of those attending will probably vote for Obama as the "lesser evil," but the main lesson is that many liberals are open to intense criticism of capitalism and the electoral system that helps preserve it.

Aging but Active Red

The Relationship of Workers to the Party

In a Sept. 3 letter, Red Coal (RC) insists that workers should have the right to strike and protest "government" policies in a communist society. Rather than banning strikes, RC asks, "Shouldn't we have more faith in the workers? Shouldn't we have more confidence in the power of communist ideas?" RC further states that strikes are necessary especially to protect job safety.

continued on page 7

Russia-U.S. Rivalry Sharpens War Threat, Intensifies Fascism

Russia's onslaught into Georgia, a major strategic setback for U.S. rulers, shifts the imperialist rivalry into a new, more dangerous phase. The U.S. war machine no longer holds a monopoly on invasion and must now contend with the restored might of Moscow's 1,200,000-strong nuclear-armed forces. For example, Pentagon planners targeting Iran will have to raise their estimates of needed troops and figure out how to get them.

Eight years ago, the top-level, Clinton-appointed Hart-Rudman commission formulated far-reaching plans for maintaining U.S. global supremacy into the 21st Century, including militarization under a domestic police state. Its foreign policy chapter stated, "It is a critical national interest of the United States that no hostile… [predominant power] arise in any of the globe's major regions, nor a hostile global peer rival or a hostile coalition comparable to a peer rival." On Russia, Hart-Rudman warned against political developments that Putin in fact later led, "A form of Russian national socialism [fascism — Ed.], emboldened by a revived form of pan-Slavism, could do enormous harm over all of Eurasia and beyond" ["harm" to U.S. ruling-class interests —Ed].

PUTIN INSTITUTES WARTIME FASCISM

Former KGB agent Putin's success in reorganizing Russia into an imperialist power contrasts sharply with Bush's failure to carry out Hart-Rudman's recommendations. Putin has mercilessly disciplined pro-U.S. political dissenters and businessmen. Alexander Litvinenko, a KGB turncoat who criticized the Kremlin from London, died horribly in 2006 from a Russian-sourced radioactive poison. Mikhail Khodorkovsky, ex-chief of the former oil giant Yukos — which he tried to sell to Exxon Mobil — rots in a Siberian jail, his latest parole bid summarily denied. Putin ended regional elections and effectively nationalized major industry, especially energy, which Russia wields as a weapon.

The soaring price of oil, partly due to the U.S.'s Iraq fiasco — which has been far from meeting predicted oil production goals — has helped immensely to strengthen oil-exporting Russia. But mostly, Putin & Co. have stirred up a nationalist fervor for resurrecting the old Russian empire. The Russians have a big head start in moving to an imperialist wartime footing, stemming from both good and bad periods of their past.

From World War II, they retain the collective memory of the red-led mass mobilization against their Nazi enemies — the greatest single undertaking in history. In the late 1980s, the now state-capitalist Soviet rulers opted for open capitalism, crushing all workers' past gains, and the old Soviet Union imploded. U.S. capitalism chose this as an opportunity to install a "new world order" with only one superpower — the U.S. This worked for a while, but the U.S./NATO war against Russian ally Serbia became the turning point for Russia's bosses. The latter needed justification to get back at the U.S. and the recent U.S./NATO-inspired independence for Kosovo — taking it away from Serbia — fit the bill. Following Georgia's invasion of its two northern pro-Russian autonomous provinces, Moscow turned around and recognized their independence.

Russia's bosses have used nationalistic patriotism to influence workers to accept worsening living conditions and tight government social control. Pensions are down, the former communist-led healthcare system is in shambles, wages go unpaid for months, and prostitution and Mafia-type crime are rife.

Bosses' nationalist and profit drives, whether from Moscow or Washington, run counter to the interests of the international working class, including Russia's workers.

U.S. BOSSES HOPE OBAMA-BIDEN CAN SPUR WAR EFFORT

U.S. rulers, on the other hand, thought they could counter Russian influence in the old Soviet bloc without committing U.S. ground troops. They banked on bribes instead, through election-fixing "revolutions" in Georgia and the Ukraine among others, financed by Rockefeller ally and billionaire George Soros, and massive arms shipments to two-bit pro-U.S. leaders like Georgia's Saakashvili.

While the Bush gang tortures and murders "detainees" in its worldwide prison camps and terrorizes immigrants at home, it has failed to enact the society-transforming fascistic measures outlined in Hart-Rudman and other strategic proposals. These include a thorough revamping of education "in the national interest," a top-to-bottom centralization of law enforcement agencies, and a systematic indoctrination of elected officials to support the rulers' military priorities.

To their dismay, only the Homeland Security Department proposal has been established, and that is pretty disorganized although able to carry out terroristic anti-immigrant raids. (See page 3) In addition, instead of ruling-class-imposed discipline, economic chaos reigns domestically. Bankers, bent on doing whatever they please, got rid of their nemesis Eliot Spitzer, the rulers' supposed Sheriff of Wall Street. Financial crises mount. U.S. rulers are counting on "Change" candidate Barack Obama to initiate the mobilization they need. Their new situation regarding Russia explains why Obama chose arch-imperialist draft supporter Joe Biden as his running mate. [See adjoining box and article on Conventions, page 2]

Russia's newfound militarism is already damages U.S. influence far beyond Georgia, Agence France Presse reported (8/17/08). "President Hugo Chavez said...that Russian President Dimitri Medvedev wants to send a Russian naval fleet to visit Venezuela." And Russia is increasing its arms sales to U.S. foe Syria. We don't say that World War III will start tomorrow. We do, however, recognize that chances for a global flare-up have risen qualitatively, without counting either China's inevitably destabilizing role or Europe's ambiguous loyalties. The rulers' power grabs constantly increase the risk of deadlier wars.

All this U.S. capitalist economic anarchy and faltering trillion-dollar wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have come down hard on the U.S. working class while killing millions of workers abroad. Wages are down, prices and unemployment are up, racist policy brutality and Nazi-like immigration raids are intensifying. The only road to reverse such assaults — in both the U.S. and Russia, as well as worldwide — it to build a mass international Progressive Labor Party that aims to establish a profit-free communist society without exploitation, unemployment, racism, sexism and capitalist borders.✪

OBAMA'S VEEP PICK BIDEN HAS IMPERIALIST PEDIGREE

Joe Biden voted for the Iraq war and the fascist Patriot Act. He wants to send U.S. soldiers as "peacekeepers" to fight pro-China forces in Darfur. He now sponsors a bill that would send $15 billion in aid to Pakistan's yet-to-be-named next dictator. Biden's ruling-class mentor is Leslie Gelb, former NY Times editor and head of the Rockefeller-financed Council on Foreign Relations. Together they wrote a major policy paper on Iraq which proposed partitioning it into three autonomous regions, a plan that foundered on the inability to apportion its huge oil reserves.

In 2005, Biden told NBC News, "The United States will 'have to face' a painful dilemma on restoring the military draft as rising casualties result in persistent shortfalls in US army recruitment (Agence France Presse, 6/12/05). "It's just a reality," Biden said.

LETTERS Continued

Under capitalism a strike (for example against unsafe working conditions) is one of the workers' weapons against racist, sexist capitalist exploiters. In a communist society safety would be the first consideration on any job while any risks in emergencies would be shared equally, unlike a capitalist system where profits and class privilege are primary.

If workers struck in a communist society, it would indicate that they thought the working-class leadership of the communist party had become class enemies like capitalists. Arguing that strikes may be necessary under communism indicates a lack of confidence in communist ideas by implying that the working class shouldn't trust or need the Party.

Because of uneven economic and political development (the richest one-fifth of the world's population accounts for 86% of private consumption while the poorest one-fifth accounts for only 1.3%), some minority sections of the working class may feel that they have needs that are contradictory to those of the majority. In such cases, PL's commitment to egalitarianism and internationalism must prevail over more selfish, national, racist and sexist ideas.

Many small and large struggles, even wars, may take place because of this. If communism is to prevail, the Party must give strong, principled leadership to the working class. This doesn't have to mean that the working class will be alienated from political power because working-class ideas and leadership will constantly be sought after and developed by the Party until eventually everyone will become communist organizers.

I hope that comrade RC will ask his Party comrade about the possibility of getting into a study group and discussing the relationship of workers to the Party.

A Comrade

'Lincoln' Review Lacked Historical Context

The article on Lincoln (CHALLENGE, 9/3), while not untrue, lacks historical rigor. Lincoln was clearly a racist, anti-Indian (in fact, when mobilizing the Union troops he had to call many of them back from fighting Indians in the West) and would have permitted slavery to remain intact (though he was against expansion), if the Union would be preserved.

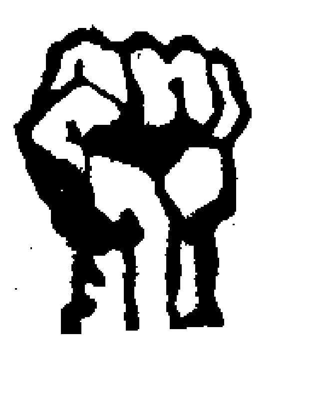
The article reveals things about Lincoln that appear personal. But more important, he was against the expansion of slavery because he supported the expansion of industrialization and wage labor. However, within the Republican Party he was in the center at best, maybe even tilted to the right. During the Civil War, the radical Republicans, who opposed all slavery, were beginning to flex their muscles and by the end of the war they were becoming a dominant force within the Republican Party.

Lincoln remained a moderate until he was assassinated. His plans for "reconstruction" would have left the Southern ruling class intact but without slavery. Lincoln's plans for black people would have left them at the mercy of their former owners. Clearly, that was a racist position. While ultimately "radical reconstruction" failed to truly change black and white relations, its programs went much further in dealing with the questions of the Southern ruling elite and racism.

The article doesn't give any historical background. Even the title is incorrect; Lincoln was not pro-slave. He was racist and his opposition to slavery was primarily against its expansion, and holding the Union together. Expanding industrial capitalism, especially out West, was his major goal.

CHALLENGE should be more careful in dealing with historical issues. The real story of U.S. rulers needs no exaggeration to be condemned and thrown into the racist trash-bin of history.

P.M., History Teacher



Olympic Flame Foretells Imperialist Inferno

U.S., RUSSIAN, CHINESE RULERS BATTLE IN BEIJING

Every four years the bosses get their chance to parade nationalism with the Olympics games. Gold medals for hypocrisy should go to the rulers of every country that sent athletes to Beijing, with the U.S., China, and Russia taking the lion's share. This "peaceful gathering of nations" served as yet another battleground in an imperialist rivalry that has just escalated to a new level of armed conflict. Russia's premier Putin actually took advantage of the opening ceremonies to tell Bush to his face "War has begun," in Georgia. By the time the games closed, Russia's emboldened military was threatening pro-U.S. Ukraine and Moldova with the Georgia treatment.

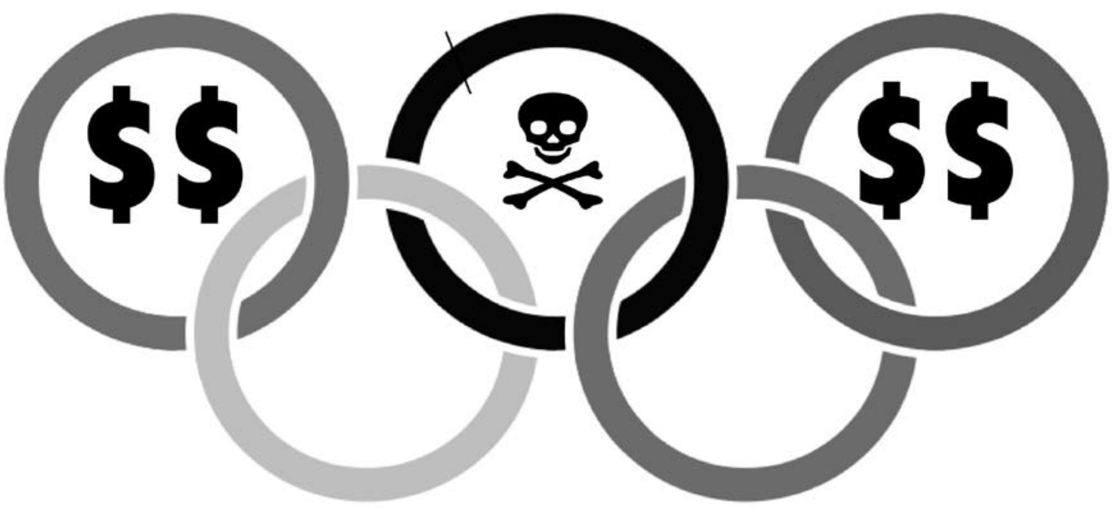
U.S. pundits used the event to accuse the Chinese of hosting "totalitarian games...a showcase for a dictatorship" (Boston Globe, 8/24/08) and made comparisons with Hitler's Nazi extravaganza in 1936. But U.S. bosses' gripe with China has nothing to do with "human rights" (as they claim) and everything to do with its support for anti-U.S. forces in Darfur, Burma, Zimbabwe, Iran, North Korea and elsewhere. In Beijing, Bush muttered about China's "repression," while the U.S. war machine continued to commit crimes against humanity in Iraq and Afghanistan. We can expect more carnage before the rivals reconvene for the London games in 2012. Not only are Russian bosses feeling their imperialist oats, but the Pentagon has elevated Africa to a theater of war, like the Middle East, by setting up its new Africa Command. And the U.S. Navy has re-established its Fourth Fleet, charged with patrolling Latin America, just as Russian warships plan to visit Venezuela. World rulers may well have to take a wartime Olympic break, as they did in 1916 (during World War 1), in 1940 and 1944 (during World War II).

PARADING ELITISM, OLYMPICS DESPISE WORKING CLASS

Another side of Olympic phoniness is elitism. The remarkable athletic feats witnessed at Beijing hardly reflect general physical fitness back home, especially in the U.S., with its sickening youth culture of junk food and video games. For every Michael Phelps, there are millions of U.S. children who never even learn how to swim. Competitive sports in the U.S. are open almost exclusively to affluent families that can afford to enroll in year-round leagues and hire private coaches. Parents dreaming of scholarships, endorsements or are selfishly living their lives through their children, push them to the brink and over. Olympians mainly represent a select few of these few, lucky survivors of this over-training, which causes participants, particularly girls, grave injuries like ligament tears and concussions at epidemic rates.

The Olympics were born of inter-imperialist rivalry. A French nobleman, Baron de Coubertin, started the modern Olympic movement to rouse French youth to fitness following his country's humiliation in a war with Prussia in 1878. The Olympics were built as a playground for ruling classes to compete with each other, even implementing until the 1970s a no-professional rule that barred athletes who accepted pay for athletics. They used this rule to limit participation by working-class athletes. Anti-working class racism permeated the Olympics, especially during the reign of its pro-Nazi president, Avery Brundage (see box this page).

The amateur rule would be thrown out during the 1970s because many imperialist countries could not compete anymore with nations with state-sponsorship of athletes. The Soviet Union briefly ran a sports program that both served the majority of its youth and produced world-class athletes. But Soviet leaders went the all-elite route when they fully embraced capitalism in the post-Stalin era.



SPORTSMANSHIP GETS A CAPITALIST KICK IN THE FACE

Finally, there is the seldom practiced ideal of "fairness" and "sportsmanship." Olympic organizers set the tone for cheating at the opening by hiding a talented seven-year-old singer backstage while a "prettier" girl lip-synched for the cameras. The U.S. media jumped all over this "outrage." But how much different was it from Hollywood's exploitive starlet system or the viciousness of "American Idol"? Underage Chinese gymnasts and doped Ukrainian weightlifters were sure to follow. Kicking a biased referee square in the face, a Cuban takewondo competitor showed exactly how fair and sportsmanlike the games actually are. The prevailing ethic at Beijing wasn't the fair play of friendly sport but the win-at-all-costs mentality of capitalist warmakers.

Sure there were some thrilling Olympic moments. But if they result only in patriotic chants for one country over another they are deadly for the international working class and lead straight into the plans of the rulers for wider wars and more capitalist exploitation. A better competition for workers to take sides in is Progressive Labor Party's long-term struggle to eliminate the profit system, and the imperialist wars it generates, through communist revolution.✪

Pro-Nazi Olympic Honcho Ruled With Racist Hand



The anti-working-class racism in the Olympics reached a peak in the infamous incident involving Native American runner Jim Thorpe (photo at right) who won both the pentathlon and decathlon in the 1912 Olympics. The following January he was stripped of his gold medals by the International Olympic Committee because he supposedly received $2 a day for playing minor league baseball (based on a report from racist Avery Brundage who Thorpe had beaten in the two events). However, the IOC violated its own rules since medals could only be revoked if violations were reported within 30 days after the Olympics ended and this was five months later.

When Brundage became head of the U.S. Olympic Committee, he intensified his racism. He opposed a boycott of the 1936 Berlin Olympics which Hitler used as a Nazi showcase, refusing to ban the "Heil Hitler" salute at the games ("The Olympic Story," by James Churchill) while simultaneously declaring that "politics didn't belong in the Olympics." He then backed the future Holocaust perpetrators by barring two outstanding Jewish runners from the U.S. team, including Marty Glickman who later became a prominent New York sportscaster.

Then at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics, during Brundage's 20-year reign as head of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), he suspended two black athletes, Tommie Smith and John Carlos, after they had raised their fists during the awards ceremony in anti-racist solidarity with the U.S. Civil Rights movement.

Brundage's IOC "leadership" also opposed women's participation: "I am fed up to the ears with women as track and field competitors… [their] 'charms' sink to something less than zero….They are ineffective and unpleasing on the track." ("The Ultimate Book of Sports Lists," by Andrew Postman)

Brundage praised the Nazis at a Madison Square Garden rally in NYC in 1938, the same year Hitler awarded Brundage's Construction Company with a contract to build the German embassy in the U.S. Such was the racism of the Brundage-led Olympics that during his IOC presidency he denied restoration of Thorpe's medals. International protest later led to their restoration in 1982 after Brundage had retired.✪